

Summary/Final Minutes – Work Session – July 25, 2013

Savannah City Government SUMMARY/FINAL MINUTES MAYOR AND ALDERMEN WORK SESSION CITY MANAGER'S BRIEFING July 25, 2013 – 10:00 am

PRESENT: Mayor Edna B. Jackson, Presiding
Alderman Van R. Johnson, II Mayor Pro-Tem (arrived at 10:30 a.m.)
Alderman Tony Thomas, Chairman of Council
Alderman Mary Osborne, Vice-Chairman of Council
Aldermen John Hall, Mary Ellen Sprague, Carol Bell
Tom Bordeaux and Estella Shabazz

City Manager Stephanie S. Cutter
City Attorney W. Brooks Stillwell (arrived at 11:15 a.m.)
Asst. City Attorney William W. Shearouse

Mayor Jackson called the meeting to order and made the following announcements:

On Monday, July 22, a call was received from HUD to assist them with getting some needed information. The Senators' support was needed for the closure of Senate Bill 1243, which is called the TUG Bill (the Bill between Transportation and HUD) which affects all of the CDBG funds, Choice Community and Hitch Village areas. For the past couple of days, City Manager, Stephanie Cutter and Public Information Director, Bret Bell have diligently worked to pull together letters. Thankfully, due to the contacts verbally and in writing they voted for closure of the filibuster. The next phase is for the Senators to amend. There are 6 billion dollars in the Senate Bill and in the House Bill all funds have been taken out. The Senate Bill needs to be passed and a letter must go out to the members. The failure of transportation and HUD would affect Savannah and Housing. Maurice Jones, Deputy Director of GMA will be working with Federal Lobbyist, Becky Taylor to help get all of this completed. All of this keeps us on the radar as a City and it benefits us greatly.

While in Washington, the National League of Cities (NLC) had a group of Mayors meet with Dr. Duncan, Secretary of Education, to discuss Community and Public School systems working hand in hand to see how more outreach can be done. Secretary Duncan was very excited and would like to meet with the Superintendant and possibly come to Savannah.

Mr. Nugent called to request a meeting while she was in Washington about Workforce Development. Savannah is the condor through which workforce development funds go through. A meeting was held with all elected officials throughout all the regions to discuss how we can build and continue working as one unit. Mayor Jackson stated she may ask some members of Council to assist her with the completion of some of the upcoming projects. It makes Council look good and helps to build the workforce development program and get more jobs in the City of Savannah.

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Alderman Osborne commended Mayor Jackson for continuing to handle City of Savannah business while on vacation. She believes Mr. Nugent is pleased with the progress being made.

The NLC Summit will be in Savannah September 26-28, 2013.

Mayor Jackson thanked City Manager Cutter, Bret Bell and Council's staff again for all their hard work.

City Manager Cutter introduced Noel Perkins and Thomas Thomson from The Metropolitan Planning Commission to discuss City Council Redistricting overview efforts.

Noel Perkins began by stating the process is moving along. Laura Hall will be assisting with the presentation. As an overview from the chart across the board the percentages are good, all numbers are almost evenly distributed. The differences are minimal at this point. When the redistricting began, Districts 1 and 5 had an excess of 6,400 and 2,100 individuals respectively. District 2 was short 3,800, District 3 was short 2,900, District 4 was short almost 900 and District 6 was short 900. The current difference is within a few hundreds of where they need to be. The preservation of the minority/majority district is in effect. All numbers may not be where everyone wants them to be, but this is a work in progress. Nothing is final until Council agrees with all changes made.

During and at the close of the presentation the following questions were asked and comments made:

Alderman Bordeaux requested Mr. Perkins go through the basic rules. He stated Federal Law states Districts must be drawn to have as many equal numbers as possible. One person one vote regardless to whether they vote or not. Optimal value is 22,444 and the protection of the Minority/Majority Districts.

Alderman Osborne asked Mr. Perkins to explain what "protect the Minority/Majority District" meant. Mr. Perkins stated the Minority/Majority Districts are those which the Minority population is the Majority within that population. The Fair Voting Act of 1965 requires it's at least a 51% Majority in that District which is the bare minimum. In Savannah Districts 1, 2, 3 and 5 must all be above 51%.

General guidelines state: neighborhoods cannot be split, as few voting precincts should be split as possible and try to alter the existing voting boundaries as little as possible.

Alderman Osborne asked if the Board of Elections viewed the guidelines in reference to splitting the voting precincts. Mr. Perkins replied, yes The MPC works with them.

Alderman Bordeaux asked if there were provisions for District compactness in Districts. Mr. Perkins stated there is a lot that is unacceptable such as creating land bridges. The idea is to grow and shrink as necessary based on the population and racial distribution.

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Mr. Thomson suggested the process be reviewed on how this map was created in terms of individual changes.

Mr. Perkins stated when the 6 non At-Large Aldermen met with the MPC staff all suggestions were taken into account; after meeting with everyone staff then went back to balance all Districts out. It was a challenge trying to move 6,400 residents from District 1 into the other Districts, since it only borders 2 other Districts. It then becomes a domino effect and all Districts shift. It has to be contiguous when moving Districts into one another. Land Islands can be moved if necessary, but the population has to be balanced along with racial distribution within each District to meet the requirements. The 2 non minority/majority Districts have no requirements. There is a general trend of the population heading west and as the City grows the districts have to shift as well. The Cuyler Brownsville Neighborhood was split and the MPC staff had to go back and readjust the changes.

Alderman Osborne asked Mr. Perkins to distinguish between the changes made and what the original map looked like. Mr. Perkins presented a larger version of the map and explained the changes were signified by the solid lines and the original District boundaries are signified by the dotted lines. Alderman Osborne asked Mr. Perkins to elaborate briefly on the changes that were made to her District. Her concern is that her non-white majority residents dropped significantly from what it was originally and she was displeased. Mr. Perkins asked her if she was referring to what the numbers were in 2000. She responded the percentages were higher in other Districts than in District 2, but would not tie-up the meeting to discuss it at this time because she understands nothing is final at this point.

Alderman Shabazz suggested a portion of the proposed change needed to be moved back to District 1 and the Ogeechee Road area needed to be put back into District 5. Mr. Perkins stated they looked at that as an option, but the population density would make District 1 totally unbalanced and the percentage wouldn't work because it caused the population to be too high. (The area Alderman Shabazz was referencing was the Cuyler-Brownsville Neighborhood he referenced earlier which was split). Alderman Shabazz requested a meeting with Mr. Thomson.

Mr. Thomson stated the purpose of the presentation is to continue working on redistricting all areas and getting to a point where all Aldermen are satisfied with the numbers.

Alderman Osborne asked when was the deadline for the redistricting to be completed. Mr. Thomson answered about a year.

Alderman Johnson stated this is a part of the process and should be used as an opportunity for members of Council to look at what has been done and use this as an opportunity to dialogue with one another.

Mr. Thomson reminded Council that the MPC staff members are the technical advisors not the drawers of Districts, when changes are made they will advise Council on how it will be perceived by The Department of Justice (DOJ).

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Alderman Sprague asked in terms of keeping neighborhoods together, of the 22,444 how much can you wiggle from that. Are you trying to get it to the exact number, does it have to be that precise? Mr. Perkins stated it's within 5% across the board (plus or minus 2.5%) but with today's technology DOJ wants the numbers high. What they look at is the fact that it can be narrowed down to at least 1 or 2%. Alderman Sprague asked if the 22,444 times 5% is the wiggle room. Mr. Perkins responded it's 5% between the lowest number and the highest number.

Alderman Bordeaux commended the MPC staff on a job well done and asked if there is a reasonable way within the rules and guidelines to draw the Districts so they will be less racially skewed. Mr. Perkins responded, you can within the rules but what throws it off is that they are bound by the blocks by which the Census Bureau allows them to move the populations. The populations are racially skewed in certain areas, but what happens is one block may be majority white with 10 residents and the block across the street may be majority white with 1,000 residents. What may look like a simple fix isn't because blocks have to be moved contiguously or it will dilute the entire neighborhood, which in turn throws off the percentages. The closer you get to the downtown neighborhoods blocks are smaller, denser, with higher populations. Blocks can only be moved one by one. Very few are 100% of any ethnicity.

Alderman Johnson stated when using the technical term "non-white" the assumption is black. Is the City of Savannah still a black/white City essentially or are minority populations growing to the point where there are some considerations that have to be made. Mr. Perkins responded, in the 2010 Census there were about 72 racial classifications which included white, then the breakdown of everyone else and mixes. The way it works you're allowed to choose residents that identify themselves as all white and those are your white populations, all others are considered a minority.

Mr. Thomson stated he doesn't have the statistics in his head but he believes the popular category that has grown more than others is Hispanic, but the African American segment is still the largest amongst them all. Mr. Perkins stated Hispanic is not a racial classification according to the Census Bureau; it is counted separately and is not broken down as one of the racial classifications.

Alderman Shabazz stated in her opinion she doesn't see where the numbers for the non-white percentage in the Districts that have been presented today are skewed. She agrees with what is listed, but like Alderman Osborne is concerned about the 61.7% of the non-white percentage in her District. Their Districts border one another and is the reason for her previous statement. She then asked to look at the southern portion of District 5.

Going back to Alderman Bordeaux's question, Mr. Thomson stated as a planner looking out to the future he recognizes the growth of undeveloped areas are in Districts 1 and 5. These areas have a pretty good mixture of population based on what is seen in the Census so far. A portion of non-whites may be less in the new growth areas than what they are in the current Districts. Over the 10-year period these Districts will be slightly diluted on the high numbers (no calculations have been done as of yet) however it is a reasonable assumption that there will be a different proportion of white and non-white residents moving into those areas. MPC staff completed work

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for the former City Attorney on the New Hampstead area and it was estimated to be about 35% non-white and 65% white.

Alderman Bordeaux asked Mr. Thomson if he could get any numbers on what the expected growth of that area would be within the next 10 years. Mr. Thomson replied they have projections which are used for transportation planning but it's not broken out by race. Alderman Bordeaux asked if Council could receive a copy of the projections to see how skewed the numbers are. Mr. Thomson stated he would get it to the members of Council, but wanted them to keep in mind they are dealing with what the 2010 Census says. The last 10 years of growth has moved to the west and they see that trend continuing.

Alderman Thomas asked if the redistricting was going to be broken out District by District or were roundtable discussions going to continue. Mr. Perkins responded. MPC staff is in the process of putting together District maps to give to each member of Council. Alderman Thomas then asked to see District 6. He suggested what would simplify this is to continue going through this process, but when making these changes MPC should lay them out to the Aldermen so they can see the changes that have been made before creating a great map so there can be some discussion amongst all Council members to make the process go a little smoother.

Mayor Jackson stated one of the things agreed upon about a month ago was the Aldermen with intersecting Districts would meet with one another or with MPC staff to discuss changes. It is important for all Aldermen to sit down with MPC staff because they are doing projections and will simply move Districts around the best way they see fit. She suggested a timetable be set to get the changes completed.

Alderman Osborne stated she believes this is something that should be periodically reviewed? Mayor Jackson agreed but stated a time table should still be set.

Alderman Thomas stated what is being presented today is something completely different than what was discussed with him when he met with MPC staff. He stated when he first discussed changes to his District with the staff it was only about one area (Savannah Commons), but what he is viewing today looks as if an entire area has been divided.

Mayor Jackson asked Mr. Thomson if the map being presented today was the last map she received from MPC staff. He replied, yes. Mayor Jackson replied, that was the map she asked all Council members to come into her office to view. Mr. Thomson said he asked the members of Council to come view the map as well, some did and others didn't.

Mayor Jackson stated she brought the map to the office so Council members could come in and view the changes that were made. She suggested as changes are made the Council members that are affected receive a call from MPC staff to inform them of what has been done.

Alderman Osborne stated she's not sure what map is in the Mayor's office and referred to Mr. Thomson with the question, is the map presented today the same as what was in her office? He replied yes. She then stated when she saw the map she wasn't happy with it because the changes

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that were made had her District going past Ogeechee Road which was unacceptable. What is being shown today is different however, she still isn't pleased with the percentages. Mayor Jackson stated when she looked at the map she knew Council members needed to get together and suggested again that all Council members get together.

Mr. Thomson stated when MPC staff changed the map they changed the designation to Map D; they brought a map for all members of Council today. He suggested if there are issues that need to be discussed come in individually or if it affects more than one Council member come in together.

Alderman Osborne suggested having the Mayor's staff send out some dates to the members of Council.

Mayor Jackson asked if Council members wanted to meet collectively and then go to MPC to meet with their staff to discuss changes. Mayor Jackson asked Mr. Thomson to distribute the map to all members of Council.

Mr. Thomson suggested the meetings be held at MPC due to technology and to make the meeting a Workshop for all Council members to attend because when moving Districts it affects all Council members as a whole.

Mayor Jackson asked for a date to be established for Council to meet at MPC. Council agreed to meet Wednesday, August 14, 2013 at 5:30 p.m.

Executive Session

Upon a motion by Alderman Bordeaux, seconded by Alderman Shabazz and unanimously carried, approval was given to amend the agenda to go into Executive Session.

Upon a motion by Alderman Hall, seconded by Alderman Thomas and unanimously carried, approval was given to go into Executive Session to discuss litigation.

Upon a motion by Alderman Johnson, seconded by Alderman Shabazz and unanimously carried, approval was given to come out of Executive Session where no votes were taken.

Savannah Pharmacy presentation was deferred until August 8, 2013.

Council broke for lunch

City Manager Stephanie Cutter presented the City Manager's Briefing of the agenda items for the Council Meeting of July 25, 2013. The agenda is attached and made a part of the permanent record.

Mayor Jackson adjourned this meeting.



Dyanne C. Reese, MMC, Clerk of Council